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ABSTRACT

This guide provides parents of gifted children with information on how to assist their child in preparing for college. The guide discusses characteristics of gifted students that may affect college planning. These are: multiple talents, idealistic thinking, sensitivity to expectations, and isolation from other gifted students. The guide identifies the college preparation steps that gifted students should take during the secondary years, explains how these students can explore possible career paths, and offers recommendations on how parents can help their gifted child find an appropriate college. A list of organizations and electronic resources that offer information about gifted students and college planning is provided. (CR)

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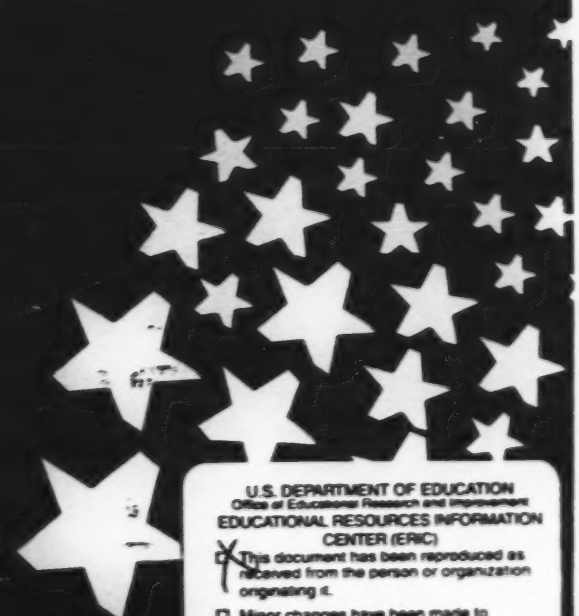

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Children who are "gifted" demonstrate a high performance capability in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas, leadership ability, or specific academic fields. This brochure discusses early steps parents and their gifted children can take to prepare for college and to ensure that the college experience is positive.

What Characteristics of Gifted Students May Affect College Planning?

- **Multiple talents (sometimes called multitalentedness or multipotentiality).** Gifted students often have a wide variety of interests, and they may miss opportunities by focusing too early on one academic area. Encourage your child to explore all of the possibilities for his or her talents.

- **Idealistic thinking.** Gifted students often want to find solutions to global problems and become deeply invested in exploring ideas to their limits. To sustain that interest, your child needs strong academic support. In college, he or she will benefit from stimulating courses that integrate disciplines.

- **Sensitivity to expectations.** Gifted children tend to be very sensitive to the expectations of their parents and teachers. To avoid creating feelings of guilt or underachievement, be sure to give your child options and a strong say in every college-related decision that is made.

- **Isolation from other gifted students.** Many gifted students are not challenged academically by their peers in high school and enter college unprepared for competition from other gifted students. Emphasize that learning—not getting the highest grades in the class—is what college is about.

When Should Gifted Children Begin Preparing for College?

By 7th or 8th grade, many gifted children have departed from their schools' traditional age-in-grade groupings. These students need a broad range of academic options—such as advanced placement courses—to supplement their high school curriculum. This is a good time to begin thinking about and preparing your child for the important decisions he or she soon will face.

Some gifted children are not prepared adequately for college because counseling programs differ so much from district to district. To better prepare every gifted child, a program based on the following sequence should begin early in adolescence:

- **Seventh and eighth grades:** Emphasis on self-awareness, time management, work/study skills, and career awareness. Students design a preliminary academic plan that includes courses required by the state and those required for college.

- **Ninth and tenth grades:** Emphasis on decision making and goal setting. Students identify and pursue their interests and learn

how their academic talents, values, and goals relate to possible careers. Students begin to recognize that some talents develop into vocational pursuits while others develop into leisure activities.

- **Eleventh and twelfth grades:** Emphasis on the practical aspects of college and career planning, including the college application process, exposure to occupations and job internships, and mentor relationships.

How Can Gifted Children Explore Possible Career Paths?

Because they have such a broad range of interests and abilities, some gifted students have difficulty deciding on a career path. Most colleges, however, expect students to decide on a course of study by their third year. You can help by taking these steps:

- Expose your child to a variety of work environments.
- Ask open-ended questions when your child mentions careers and avoid statements that imply expectations.
- Urge your child to explore as many careers as possible.
- Encourage your child to volunteer in your community.
- Encourage your child to join high school internship programs.

How Can I Help My Gifted Child Find an Appropriate College?

Having the right kind of information about colleges will help your child make the best decision about where to go and what to study. Use the following suggestions to guide your research:

- Start with information in the school guidance office and library. Become familiar with college guides, multimedia resources, and videotapes.
- Obtain literature from your top 15 to 20 choices and read it carefully. Organize important information, such as the colleges' goals, recruitment procedures, support for incoming freshmen, location, size, cost, academic life, course offerings, honors programs, faculty, grading policies, selection of applicants, and availability of financial aid. Narrow your list to 5 to 10 colleges.
- Visit campuses and talk to admission personnel, faculty, and students about academic and campus life.

What Resources Are Available To Help Gifted Students Prepare for College?

Preparing for college can be a confusing process for any student, including those who are gifted. Fortunately, many organizations and electronic sources are available to help

parents and their children further explore the issues discussed in this brochure.

Organizations

The following organizations offer information about gifted students and their college planning.

American Association for Gifted Children
1121 West Main Street, Suite 100
Durham, NC 27701
919–683–1400

Center for Academically Talented Youth
The Johns Hopkins University
Charles and 34th Streets
Baltimore, MD 21218
410–516–0337

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
1–800–328–0272
703–264–9474

National Association for Gifted Children
1707 L Street NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20036
202–785–4268

Electronic Sources

The Internet offers a wide variety of information about educating and raising children who are gifted.

World Wide Web

- *The U.S. Department of Education Web Site.* A veritable "shopping mall" of resources. Gopher: gopher.ed.gov or URL: http://www.ed.gov
- *The Gifted Resources Home Page.* Offers links to myriad online resources for gifted children, including enrichment programs, talent searches, summer programs, accelerated university programs, and other special programs. URL: http://www.eskimo.com/~user/kids.html
- *The ERIC Systemwide Web Site.* Offers links to useful resources for gifted children. URL: http://www.aspensys.com/eric/

Listservs

- *GiftedNet-l.* Send e-mail to listserver@listserv.cc.wm.edu. In the text line type "Subscribe giftednet-l <firstname lastname>."
- *TAG-L.* Send e-mail to listserv@vm1.nodak.edu. In the text line type "Subscribe TAG-L <firstname lastname>."
- *TAGFAM.* Send e-mail to listserv@sjuvm.stjohns.edu. In the text line type "Subscribe TAGFAM <firstname lastname>."

Sources

References identified with ED are abstracted in the ERIC database. They are available in microfiche collections at more than 900 locations or can be obtained in paper copy from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at 1–800–443–ERIC. Call 1–800–LET–ERIC for more details.

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